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ABSTRACT

This report examines the difficulties schools encounter as they seek qualified teachers. The paper focuses on the southeastern portion of the United States, using North Carolina as a case study. Emerging teacher shortages in the state have put pressure on administrators to staff classrooms at all costs, weakening the case for high standards for teachers. The problem is particularly acute in hard-to-staff schools, which are typically located in the state's poorest districts. Although financial incentives are important in securing teachers for these classrooms, these schools also need strong leaders who involve teachers in key instructional decisions. Teachers in these schools require like-minded colleagues who are committed to teamwork; additionally, these teachers must have sufficient knowledge and skills to help students learn, and they must be willing to serve as leaders and mentors. Developing "local talent" can help place teachers in hard-to-staff schools, but school systems need to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan when trying to attract teachers. Part of this plan includes collecting and reporting data so that effective strategies can be identified. The paper provides specific recommendations for staffing schools. Some strategies that have been tried in 10 southeastern states are included. (Contains 20 references.) (RJM)

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Recruiting Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools

Solutions for the Southeast & the Nation

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This diversified position allows employee to exercise typing, clerical, law enforcement, and social work skills between assignments and after hours. Typical work week: 50 hours. Special nature of work may preclude amenities such as telephones or computers, but work has many intrinsic rewards. Starting salary $24,661, rising to $36,495 after only 15 years.
Likely first job assignment includes work in either isolated rural or inner-city communities, in dilapidated buildings, and in organizations that will not have strong and positive leadership, for no additional compensation.

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A Policy Brief from
The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality

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THE SOUTHEAST CENTER FOR TEACHING QUALITY SECTQ

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality is a regional office of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future.

The Center conducts research, informs policy, and engages leadership, in order to enhance opportunities for all students to have caring, competent and qualified teachers.

Recruiting Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools:
Solutions for the Southeast & the Nation

As the nation's student population grows and its information-age economy expands, so does the demand for highly qualified teachers – teachers with professional skills unmatched in previous generations. Yet forecasters tell us that, unless things change, supply will simply not meet demand.

Demographic experts predict a need for more than two million new teachers in the next decade. North Carolina alone must find more than 80,000 new teachers by 2010. Across the Southeast and the nation, a large proportion of our teaching force is approaching retirement age, and the supply problem is further compounded by state and federal initiatives to lower class sizes. How will states meet the sheer demand for new teachers, much less assure a high-quality teacher for every classroom?

These quandaries present a more troubling picture for some schools than others. For a number of "hard-to-staff" schools, the negative consequences of teacher shortages are compounded by characteristics that make these schools less attractive to teachers. Most often located in our troubled inner cities or isolated rural areas, these schools are frequently plagued by high poverty in the community, higher teacher turnover rates, insufficient physical resources, and low performance on state accountability measures.

The Education Commission of the States says "hard-to-staff" schools are those "that have a particularly difficult time finding and retaining adequately trained teachers who are effective with their student populations."[1] These schools, whose students have the greatest need for our most capable professionals, are also the schools most likely to be left with ill-prepared principals and under-qualified, inexperienced teachers.

As reports of teacher recruitment difficulties increase, policymakers in the Southeast and across the nation face a dilemma. Some will argue that growing teacher shortages mandate a lowering of standards for entry into the teaching profession. Yet every state with a high-stakes accountability system in place also expects *every* student to meet challenging standards of academic achievement. These expectations apply to *all* of our schools – even those that are the most hard-to-staff. Given historic patterns of teacher distribution, it is clear that when and if standards are lowered, the least qualified teachers will migrate, in ever larger numbers, to our highest-need schools.

Education Week recently identified 27 states that have one or more programs that offer prospective teachers college scholarships or forgivable loans. Of these, 11 have scholarships or forgivable loan programs aimed specifically at academically high-performing candidates, while 10 target minority candidates, 18 target specific subject areas, and 10 target hard-to-staff schools.

Many states offer signing bonuses, relocation expenses, housing subsidies, and a wide variety of perks in order to entice teachers to classrooms where they are needed most. We have found little research about the impact of such incentive programs generally, or their effectiveness in helping to staff our most challenged schools. Where data do exist, they suggest that these programs are not meeting their goals. In the Southeast, for example, Georgia has developed many recruitment

What is a "Hard-to-Staff" School?

For the purposes of our discussion, hard-to-staff schools meet these criteria:

- 50% or more of students are below grade level;
- 50% or more of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch in elementary schools (40% for high schools);
- 15-18% annual teacher turnover rate;
- 25% or more of teachers have provisional licenses, are lateral entry (up to five years to earn full licensure), emergency or temporary, or are probationary.

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strategies, but reports we examined show that few have drawn teachers to hard-to-staff schools. (See page 12 to learn what some southeastern states are doing to improve staffing in their hard-to-staff schools.)

Massachusetts and California are also using monetary incentives in an effort to attract teachers to high-need schools. These states offer signing bonuses ranging from $5,000 to $25,000 over four years. Massachusetts' $20,000 signing bonus program is a case in point. Three times more recruits are teaching in wealthier suburban districts than in needy urban districts and the new teachers, who only have to attend truncated summer training programs before they begin teaching, are leaving at two times the national average.

We can be certain about one fact: policy makers need much more information in order to make sound decisions, based on evidence, about which programs to implement.

> Teachers are the most powerful determinants of whether students are able to meet high standards.

QUALIFIED TEACHERS ARE VITAL TO HIGH ACHIEVEMENT

Can quality teaching really make a difference in our most challenged schools, where students begin with so many disadvantages? Evidence continues to mount that teachers are the most powerful determinants of whether students are able to meet high standards.

For example, recent studies in Tennessee and Texas reveal that teacher effectiveness is more important than one of the most often-discussed school reforms – reducing class size. The researchers found that students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers in a row have significantly lower achievement than those who are assigned to several highly effective teachers in sequence.[2]

Consider the odds of success for our most at-risk students:

- Nationwide, 26 percent of students attending high-poverty secondary schools have teachers without certification, compared to 13 percent of students who attend low-poverty schools.[3]
- Nationwide, students from high-poverty schools are almost twice as likely as students from low-poverty schools to have a teacher without a major or minor in their field.[4]
- North Carolina's low-performing schools are more likely to have out-of-field teachers and individuals teaching on substandard licenses.[5]
- In Tennessee and Texas, African American students are nearly twice as likely to be assigned to the most ineffective teachers and half as likely to be assigned to the most effective teachers.[6] There is little reason to believe that the pattern is different in states across the Southeast and much of the nation.

The most troubling data come from California, a state where teachers teach in some of the nation's poorest working conditions. California recently instituted major class-size reductions without addressing teacher supply issues. Today, over 14% of the state's 291,000 teachers lack full credentials, and students in high-minority schools have a seven-times greater chance of being taught by an unqualified teacher. Schools that serve primarily minority students are staffed with seven times more underqualified teachers than those who serve primarily white students.

Los Angeles is one of the most daunting of all of America's urban public school challenges, home to 25% of the state's under-qualified teachers. Students in the city's lowest performing schools are five times as likely to be taught by an underqualified teacher. In addition, as California's use of emergency licensing proliferates, the percentage of teachers who have completed a preparation program before entering teaching has dropped precipitously from 78% in 1991-92 to 52% in 1998-99.[7]

Without proper preparation, new teachers are less likely to stay, creating a revolving door of new and unqualified teachers for the most needy students.

A TEACHER QUALITY CRISIS: THE NORTH CAROLINA EXAMPLE

The experience of North Carolina is instructive as we explore the growing teacher quality crisis that is beginning to affect schools and districts across the region and nation.

North Carolina has not yet experienced the drastic teacher shortfall that has provoked a supply crisis in California. But emerging teacher shortages in North Carolina not only threaten the education of children, they lessen the opportunity for long-term, statewide cooperation to improve teacher quality. Pressure to staff classrooms at all costs provides a disincentive for school system leaders to unite around high standards for entry into the teaching profession. In addition, widely varying salaries, incentives, and supports create an uneven playing field where local recruiters vie for a shrinking pool of well-prepared professionals.

North Carolina currently employs 86,000 teachers. With expected retirements, enrollment increases, and a recent history of teacher turnover, the state will need to hire 80,000 additional teachers over the next ten years.[8] The state has introduced several initiatives to support teacher recruitment in general, including scholarship programs for future teachers, reduction of barriers to teachers coming from other states, and streamlining of hiring processes. In addition, the state invests at least $14 million[9] in teacher recruitment, including North Carolina Teaching Fellows, Prospective Teacher Scholarship Loans, Model Teacher Education Consortium, and NC TEACH. These efforts have produced some good results. One indicator: the state's teacher education program enrollment increased 14% last year.[10]

Despite this success, much remains to be done to actively channel teachers specifically into North Carolina's hard-to-staff schools. For example, teachers who are entering classrooms from the state's new alternative route program, NC TEACH, are not targeted to teach in the state's neediest schools. And even if hard-to-staff schools had enough teachers, they would still face a shortage of teachers who were "good enough." Why? Hard-to-staff schools hire a disproportionate share of new teachers. While some of these new teachers are well-trained, many are not. Only 20% of the state's new hires are produced by North Carolina's teacher education programs. More and more teachers are entering the state's classrooms through alternative routes,[11] some of which allow novices to bypass North Carolina's rigorous new teaching standards – standards that have been praised and emulated in other states.

Despite its significant efforts, North Carolina has clearly not managed to ensure that hard-to-staff schools can compete fairly for highly qualified teachers, or that teachers who begin their careers in hard-to-staff schools are well-qualified and prepared for the challenges they are certain to face.

North Carolina Teaching Scholarships

- Teacher Assistant Scholarship Loan: $1,200/year for practicing teaching assistants to become fully licensed. Participants agree to teach one year in the state's public schools for every year of assistance.
- North Carolina Teaching Fellows: $6,500 annually for 400 participants for four years.
- Prospective Teacher Scholarship-Loan program: $2,500/year allocated for participants attending four-year institutions or $900/year for community college coursework leading to transfer to a university program. 200 total participants each year. Payback is waived after four years of public school teaching or three years in a low-performing school.

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Teacher Recruitment and Retention in North Carolina (2001).

MEETING HIGH STANDARDS IN HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

The growing teacher supply crisis comes at a time when the need for highly qualified teachers may never have been greater. Many states are raising their student achievement standards, ending "social promotion," and instituting sanctions for schools that fail to meet performance goals. *Hard-to-staff schools will be most affected by these new policies,* since they (and their students) are most at risk of failing to meet standards.

Studies[12] have shown that most teachers would not teach in schools in a state or district's poorest communities, given a choice. Hard-to-staff schools serve children with more special needs and fewer social advantages, and teachers are not compensated for gaining the special skills necessary to meet these students' greater needs. Most often, such schools have weak leadership and meager resources, such as outdated textbooks and inferior buildings. These schools are frequently understaffed, and teachers wear too many hats, leaving little time to meet the teaching challenges they face. Teachers in these schools must sacrifice much of the comfort of wealthier school systems to serve those who need them most.

It is simply harder to teach effectively in this environment. To return to our North Carolina example, in the spring of 2000, the North Carolina Association of Educators[13] surveyed teachers across the state to determine what it would take to entice them to teach in low-performing schools. Of the 14,000 teachers who responded, only 30% indicated a willingness to accept such a challenge, even if incentives were offered. Salary bonuses were deemed important, but clearly not sufficient. What mattered most were smaller class sizes, strong administrator support, extra planning time, and instructional support personnel. The attitudes of these North Carolina teachers are very likely shared by their counterparts in the Southeast and elsewhere.

What will it take to ensure that hard-to-staff schools have the quality professional workforce they need for all students to succeed? Here are the issues:

Successful teachers in hard-to-staff schools must have strong leaders. Effective school leadership is critical to attract and retain teachers. Good teachers do not choose schools where principals perform poorly. Effective leadership means involving teachers in key instructional decisions and providing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other. Effective leaders ensure that schools run smoothly. They promote family and community involvement, and they lead and support teachers to create a safe and orderly environment.

Teacher salaries are important, and recruitment bonuses may help bring talented teachers to schools where they are needed

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most. However, money alone is not sufficient to recruit good teachers to hard-to-staff schools. For example, although the North Carolina Excellent Schools Act of 1997 has raised teacher salaries to 23rd highest in the nation (from 43rd), 14 districts across the state still face teacher shortages, with the most vacancies in needy urban and rural schools. Assuring salary equity for hard-to-staff schools is a necessary part of effective recruitment. But research tells us that effective principal and teacher leadership is equally critical.

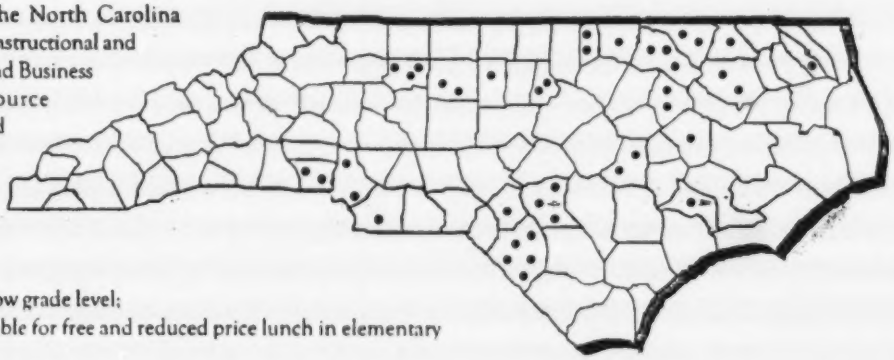
Beginning teachers are much more likely to make a long-term commitment when school leaders involve teachers in decision-making and support professional relationships among the teaching staff. Other research has shown that the extent to which principals support teachers determines whether teachers are willing to engage in implementing new curriculum and take full advantage of professional development opportunities.

Successful teachers in hard-to-staff schools work with like-minded, supportive colleagues. Even the most accomplished individuals cannot turn a poor performing school into an effective learning community without like-minded colleagues who work together as a team. Good teachers know that they must have colleagues who have similar standards and expectations. To be effective, school faculties must agree on what constitutes good student work, and they must share similar beliefs and understandings about how and why students learn.

Good teachers want to be successful with all students – and they want to work in school organizations that give them a chance to do so. Many hard-to-staff schools are found in isolated or inner-city locations. They frequently lack the resources of other public schools in more affluent neighborhoods. For these reasons, accomplished teachers are more likely to choose to work in hard-to-staff schools when there will be a "critical mass" of like-minded colleagues who share

A Closer Look at One State's Hard-to-Staff Schools

By analyzing data provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Instructional and Accountability Services, Financial and Business Services, and Human Resource Management, SECTQ determined that there are forty hard-to-staff schools in North Carolina.[1]



For our purposes, hard-to-staff schools met the following criteria:

- 50% or more of students are below grade level;
- 50% or more of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch in elementary schools (40% for high schools);[2]
- 15-18% annual teacher turnover rate;[3]
- 25% of teachers have provisional licenses, are lateral entry (up to five years to earn full licensure), emergency or temporary, or are probationary.

By state definition, schools in North Carolina are "low performing" when they fail to meet the expected growth gain standard on the state's ABC assessments and significantly less than half of students perform at or above grade level. Because low student achievement is included in our definition of hard-to-staff schools, the state's low-performing schools will sometimes, although not always, fit that definition.

In 1999-2000, 43 schools (2.1% of the total number) in the state were designated low-performing according to the state's ABC accountability system. Using our criteria, 40 schools met the SECTQ definition of a hard-to-staff school. Among these 40 schools, only 13 schools were also designated as low performing using the ABC measures.

Of the 40 schools that meet the SECTQ definition, 16 are elementary, three are middle schools, and 21 are high schools. Many of these hard-to-staff schools are in the east and northeastern portions of the state, as well as within the southern piedmont and along the urban areas of the I-40 corridor. (See map.) Of course, there are many more schools in North Carolina that are expected to have difficulties recruiting teachers in the coming years, but we assert that these 40 schools face the greatest challenges, given the obstacles described in this report.

[1] *Each dot represents one school. Placement within each county is not intended to match geographic location.*

[2] *Performance data and free and reduced price lunch figures are based upon 1999-2000 data.*

[3] *Calculated from a comparison of data for teachers and instructional support personnel from the 9th pay period of 1999-2000 to the 9th pay period of 2000-2001. Teachers and instructional support personnel split across schools in 2000-2001 were considered as having left their 1999-2000 school if school assignments were changed. Teachers and instructional support personnel assigned to a position other than teacher or instructional support for the 2000-2001 school year were considered as having left the school even if the alternative position was in the same school.*

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their commitment to excellence. State policy makers might take advantage of this teacher mindset by creating incentives and bonuses when hard-to-staff schools can demonstrate high levels of successful teacher collaboration under the leadership of an accomplished principal.

Successful teachers in hard-to-staff schools must have sufficient knowledge and skills to help students learn. Hard-to-staff schools most often serve a high proportion of disadvantaged students who may have learning difficulties and lack the family supports that make it easier to meet higher standards. Yet we now expect these students to meet the same high standards as everyone else. Clearly, the teachers who serve in hard-to-staff schools must have unprecedented skills and knowledge.

To be effective in these classrooms, teachers need to know much more about teaching reading and writing skills in subject areas like science, history and mathematics. They must be well-prepared to work with students whose primary language is not English and with students who have a variety of learning disabilities. Teachers in hard-to-staff schools must understand their subject matter thoroughly and how to teach it to students who are performing below grade level.

Equally important, these teachers must understand how students think and behave, what they find interesting, what they already know, and how they can be motivated. Teachers in each state's most challenged schools must also be able to recognize and respond to student differences that may arise from culture, language, family background, and prior schooling. They must use their understanding to adapt lessons and experiment with a variety of teaching strategies.

Many teachers are well aware that their teaching range is limited. They understand that while they may have sufficient knowledge to teach some students, they do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach *all* students. As a result, many will (wisely) shy away from schools where they may not be successful. How, then, do we encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools? *We prepare them to be successful.* We look to the colleges and universities across the United States that have been effective in training teachers to succeed in the nation's most challenging classrooms. Good examples include Trinity University in San Antonio, Bank Street College in New York City, Alverno College in Milwaukee, and other institutions that consistently produce teachers who thrive in hard-to-staff schools.

The Center staff met with faculty members at a pair of hard-to-staff schools in North Carolina. One good example of the value of specialized training surfaced in one of the schools we visited. During an interview, a new teacher who was specifically trained to teach disadvantaged students in her teacher education program revealed that she was more likely to stick with this hard-to-staff school because she believed she had the skills to make a difference with the students she taught.

In partnership with school districts, some colleges and universities have launched Professional Development Schools that can be designed to support teacher learning in the most challenging schools. These "PDS" programs can offer teachers-in-training many opportunities to learn in a "laboratory" setting, observing and working side by side with master teachers who are experts at helping struggling students achieve. State leaders need to find ways to promote the creation of many more of these Professional Development Schools and to require that they include training in hard-to-staff school environments.

Hard-to-staff schools need expert teachers to serve as leaders and mentors. High levels of support for new and continuing teachers make the difference in building a strong, united faculty in hard-to-staff schools. Much of that support must come from master teachers who agree to work in these schools. How do you attract and keep them where they are needed most? Salary incentives will help, but salary alone will not put expert teachers in every hard-to-staff school. South Carolina's teacher specialist program offers an annual bonus of up to 50% of the regional average salary to highly qualified teachers who serve in a high-need school for at least three years. Yet, three weeks after the deadline, only 115 teachers had applied to fill 500 slots for the 2000-01 school year.[15] The state just could not lure accomplished teachers to hard-to-staff schools, even with the annual bonus. It seems apparent that higher salaries will not meet the need for expert staff in these schools, in the absence of other reforms.

Why must we have expert teachers in hard-to-staff schools? They provide critical mentoring support early in a teacher's career and are an essential part of a well-crafted induction program for beginning teachers. To offer one example: retention improved in California for minority teachers in rural and urban schools when induction support for new teachers was available.[16] ("Induction" refers to the process by which a school system supports new teachers as they take on professional responsibilities for the first time.) Studies have shown that supportive induction programs include a professional development "scaffold" built around a new teacher's special needs, such as managing classrooms, motivating students, developing classroom curricula to accommodate for individual student differences, assessing student assignments, tests, and projects, and working effectively with parents and families.[17]

In one North Carolina school we visited, we found a strong principal leader who made teacher support a top priority. To increase the instructional impact of existing funds, the principal moved experienced Title I-funded teachers from

Inside Two of North Carolina's Hard-to-Staff Schools

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality investigated a pair of hard-to-staff schools in North Carolina, according to the definition laid out in this policy brief, to determine the barriers they face in their efforts to recruit and retain good teachers. The two case studies that follow reveal the complexity of teacher recruitment and the intricate policy development needed to insure that these schools will have teachers who can help all students rise to the challenge of state standards. They also underscore the importance of school leadership in building and retaining a quality teaching force. Fortunately, upon visiting the urban school, we found a number of highly promising practices that could turn the school around. Although it met our criteria for hard-to-staff, the urban elementary school was already attracting more quality teachers with its professional working climate.

Urban Elementary School

Everyone in town thinks that Urban Elementary School must be a "hard-to-staff" school. In the school's approximately 50-year history, there has never been a year in which more than one half of the students have performed at grade level on state assessments. Among Urban's 452 students, approximately 93% are minority and 85% are on free-or-reduced lunch, as compared to 53% minority and 36% free-or-reduced lunch district-wide. Urban is on North Carolina's list of low-performing schools, and a state assistance team has been assigned to support improvement. The school's single copy machine is in a constant state of disrepair, computers rarely function properly, and school administrators have difficulty procuring necessities like classroom lights and trashcans.

Personnel officials at the central office have been known in recent years to discourage teachers from considering teaching at Urban. "I really don't think they were trying to place good quality teachers here," says one new Urban Elementary teacher about her job interview. In the recruit's view, the school system had so many openings that they sought to sell the district by sending prospective teachers to visit the "good schools." The sense among some teachers is that the low status of the school and its problems securing basic resources are symptoms of thinly veiled racism in the school system and community.

"I really don't think they were trying to place good quality teachers here."

Despite its low status and history of low performance, Urban's teachers and administrators say that there is no place they would rather work. "I cannot wait to get here in the morning just to put the cones down on the parking lot," says the assistant principal, expressing his exuberance for being part of a dedicated professional community of teachers lead by a strong and supportive principal. Several of the school's faculty agreed that they enjoy mutual professional support and administrative, community, and parent participation as they work to combat the school's public image of failure.

On the outside, Urban looks like any middle-class suburban school. The facade is sturdy brick, with the school's name displayed in sophisticated metal lettering. Inside, the halls are clean and the walls are covered with student work and awards. In the main foyer an easel displays architectural plans for a new classroom building to break ground in the next few weeks. Teachers say they enjoy the pleasant environment, but the thing they value most is the leadership provided by the school's principal.

A new principal was recruited out of retirement mid-year in 1999 to give the school a boost, and her special brand of respectful leadership has brought in both experienced and new teachers committed to improvement, while reinvigorating the staff she found there. Her teachers say this principal leads by example and fosters an atmosphere of respect and professionalism. She has been a key factor in their decisions to teach at Urban.

When the principal arrived, only 17% of the school's teachers had as much as one year of experience. She was able to retain most of the teaching staff, and is raising the level of expertise by investing more of the instructional budget into fully qualified teachers. The principal has also convinced several teachers to come out of retirement and join her team, and one teacher in her 28th year decided to transfer to Urban, "because I knew I could make a difference."

To increase the instructional impact of existing funds, the principal moved experienced Title I-funded teachers from limited-impact reading positions into Lead Teacher positions at each grade level, putting a greater emphasis on spreading teaching quality across the school. These lead teachers do not have their own classes, but provide instructional support to grade level teachers. Lead teachers partner with colleagues to "co-teach," work with low-performing students, and lead weekly team planning sessions that focus on ways to improve instruction based on assessments of student performance.

New teachers are assigned mentors at their grade level to address specific needs and provide general support during their critical first year. Across the school, teachers say they receive more encouragement to work together to improve teaching than they have at other schools. Teachers who do not share the belief that all children can succeed have decided to transfer. These conditions set the stage for Urban's teachers to utilize, rather than resist, the resources of the state's assistance team.

One well-prepared young teacher that we interviewed helps make the point that good working conditions are only part of an urban school's recipe for success. Specialized teacher preparation is also critical. This teacher was prepared in an urban teacher education program in another state. Her university program was sensitive to the special needs of teachers in high-challenge schools. She participated in seminars designed to explore urban-school issues and did her pre-service teaching in a nearby inner-city district. Her training included visits to other cities and rural areas, where she had the opportunity to interact with panels of experienced teachers who shared what it is really like to teach in schools with more than the usual obstacles to high achievement.

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Teachers at Urban Elementary School expressed concerns about North Carolina's accountability and incentive system, which pays bonus money to teachers in higher performing schools. They fear that too many of their younger colleagues will leave in order to teach in schools where it is easier to meet performance goals and secure the $1,500 bonuses. They believe that in a system where teachers are rewarded for high student achievement, a school's success in bringing up the achievement of students who begin far below the average should not go unnoticed.

Rural High School

Rural is the only high school in a small and remote North Carolina district. Its 100 teachers know that they earn less than their peers in neighboring districts, and the relative low wealth of the district presents challenges all around. On average, students are less ready to learn to high standards, and there are fewer resources available to support teacher learning. The school was fully staffed this spring, and the principal is quite proud that most of her teachers signed commitments to teach next year. She is especially relieved that the teachers of Exceptional Children are planning to stay, since these specialists are hard to find in all schools. She even felt a little guilty when she was promoted from math teacher to principal last year, given the dearth of math teachers in the area.

In recent years, the community has lost some of its confidence in Rural High. As a longtime member of the community, the principal feels that she will be able to win back the trust of parents. She went to Rural herself with many of them, and she thinks they will appreciate the presence of a "local," after recent experiences with administrators who blew through town as a career step on the road to higher profile positions. She understands the concerns of her close-knit community, and she is determined to reinforce the once-cherished image of the high school as a family working together for student learning.

While this is a noble endeavor, the truth is that the community does not produce enough teachers to staff the high school or other district schools, and they will need to continue to attract educators from other areas. It seems that this small-town atmosphere may be difficult to fit into, especially for novice teachers who must work overtime to pass components of North Carolina's performance-based licensure system. Even for experienced teachers, Rural's block schedule adds stress to teachers who are accustomed to 50-minute lessons and have received too little help in planning engaging lessons in the 90-minute blocks.

The school relies heavily on lateral entry teachers, a term referring to those who are working to complete certification requirements while they are teaching, and there are not enough experienced mentors to provide support for lateral entry and initially licensed teachers. North Carolina requires all beginning teachers – most of whom receive three-year Initial Licenses after graduating from a teacher education program – to pass a standardized test and a complex performance assessment of their knowledge and skills. A few teachers mentioned that they could use much more support in preparing for the assessments.

> The superintendent provides mentor training at the district level, but he knows that it is not sufficient to connect the dots for new teachers struggling to learn to teach while managing their own classrooms.

The principal recognizes the problem of assigning mentors to all new teachers, as state guidelines require, and she said that she is working to recruit more mentors for the next school year. She is concerned that young teachers use her school to gain experience and then move on to systems with higher salaries. She suggested that having new teachers sign a commitment to work in the school beyond their mentoring experience might reduce teacher turnover. However, teachers usually choose to stay in a supportive professional environment, with salary as a secondary factor. Perhaps the lack of mentor support is key to this retention problem.

The local superintendent, a veteran teacher and principal who has returned to his native district to improve school performance, agrees that it is a challenge to support teachers and meet North Carolina's higher standards with a slim budget. The district leader was reluctant to abdicate responsibility for his "certified teacher crisis," although he feels caught between the rigorous requirements of the state and his capacity to offer resources for quality teaching. He feels responsible for becoming more creative in working with the resources he does have. He provides mentor training at the district level, but he knows the training is not sufficient to connect the dots for new teachers struggling to learn to teach while managing their own classrooms. On top of this, all of the teachers in this district face special teaching challenges, with fewer resources than other districts that serve mostly middle-class suburban students.

Although these two schools – like all schools – are unique, their stories highlight several vital issues in staffing urban and rural schools across the state. They underscore, for example, the important roles that funding and working conditions play in building the capacity of hard-to-staff schools to recruit and retain quality teachers.

Source: Based on interviews and focus groups with teachers, administrators, and Technical Assistance Team members (January 2001).

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Lessons Learned from One State's Efforts to Support and Assess New Teachers

Mentoring and other support for beginning teachers speed professional growth and increase the retention of teachers in their first assignment. The State of North Carolina has provided a mentoring program for Initially Licensed Teachers since 1985. This program was extended from one to three years under the Excellent Schools Act. At the same time, the state has ratcheted up standards for beginning teachers by requiring a performance-based assessment to earn a continuing license by the end of the third year.

State board guidelines for new teacher support include recommendations for special working conditions, such as limits on the number of daily lesson preparations; limits on the number of exceptionally difficult students assigned to new teachers; and minimal non-instructional duties. Also, according to the Excellent Schools Act, new teachers are to be assigned no extra-curricular assignments unless requested in writing by the new teacher. The state developed a new mentor training program in 1998, but local systems are free to use other training methods. The state has also produced a *Mentor Toolkit* that local school systems can purchase.

A survey of beginning teachers, mentors, and principals indicates mixed views on the success of North Carolina's school-based mentoring programs. Mentors and school principals believe that mentoring is helping new teachers remain in the classroom, while the new teachers themselves are much less likely to report that positive effect. Many novices felt the mentors had no influence on their willingness to continue teaching.

The data reveal that teachers are experiencing very different induction programs across the state. They also suggest that program quality is linked to the ability of individual school systems to adequately finance support programs for new teachers. The schools where teachers need the most support might have the least capacity for providing it.

Several important questions emerge. Are all schools able to follow the basic state guidelines to reduce stress for novice teachers? Can low-wealth or small school systems afford adequate mentor training or release time for mutual observation and planning? And, in schools with higher proportions of inexperienced teachers, are there enough qualified mentors to support them adequately?

Source: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Mentor Program Study (March 2000).

limited-impact reading positions into Lead Teacher positions at each grade level. These lead teachers do not have their own classes, but provide full-time instructional support to other teachers, partnering with colleagues to "co-teach," working with low-performing students, and leading weekly team planning sessions that focus on ways to improve instruction based on assessments of student performance. New teachers are assigned mentors to address specific needs and provide general support during their critical first year. Across the school, teachers say they receive more encouragement to work together to improve teaching than they have at other schools. As a result, they share a strong belief that all children can succeed and work toward that goal together.

To offer another example, Riverside Academy in Fairfax County, Virginia, recruited four National Board Certified Teachers to share two teaching positions while they support seven of their colleagues in their pursuit of the national credential. By recruiting and further developing a critical mass of highly accomplished teachers, the school hopes to improve the overall quality of instruction and student achievement across the board.

Developing "local talent" is a key component of the hard-to-staff school solution. Results from long-standing initiatives like the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment and the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program demonstrate that scholarships, early-interest middle school and high school programs, and other recruitment strategies can attract talented young people. We also know that mid-career programs, properly marketed, can bring non-traditional recruits into teaching. But more needs to be done to tie these programs to recruits who have deep roots in high-need communities.

Many prospective teachers, bound by ties of family or place, are reluctant to move to unfamiliar locations. For this reason, it is extremely important for policymakers to offer programs that will develop "local talent" – young people and adults who already live and work in communities with hard-to-staff schools. These programs need to address a variety of situations, from high school students who feel some "call" to teach, to out-of-field teachers who need more study and professional development to master their teaching area, to the school paraprofessionals or second-career adults who have an interest in becoming fully-prepared teaching professionals.

In 2000-01, Guilford County, North Carolina, began a grow-your-own teacher training initiative, funded with private donations. The program recruits high school seniors committed to completing teacher training and returning to teach at-risk students in poor neighborhoods. The young recruits receive college scholarships in return for three years of service in the system.

Many school systems have a grab-bag of teacher recruitment strategies, but they must also have comprehensive recruitment plans. Ultimately, teacher recruitment and hiring is the responsibility of local education agencies. Many school districts rely on college and university job fairs, newspaper ads, and Internet postings to connect with potential candidates. Some have relationships with local colleges that produce teach-

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ers, or use early contract-signing strategies to "beat the summer rush." One district in North Carolina reports paying an unlimited number of $100 bonuses to current employees who recommend certified teachers who are hired. In addition to these strategies, many school districts report an array of financial, lifestyle, community, and professional incentives for new teachers.

While many school districts have a grab-bag of recruitment strategies, it is fair to say that many also have no coherent recruitment plan. Responses to formal surveys and informal inquiries in North Carolina, for example, reveal that many district administrators have given little thought or attention to the effectiveness of their hiring processes and the link between teacher recruitment and school improvement. One district representative actually claimed that her recruitment strategy involved "smiling a lot" – hardly a comprehensive plan for drawing and keeping quality professionals in our toughest schools.

While many school districts have a grab-bag of recruitment strategies, it is fair to say that many also have no coherent recruitment plan.

There are exceptions, of course. For example, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County (NC)'s Equity Plus program offers extra incentives to high-quality teachers who agree to work in the district's most challenged schools. Teachers who remain at a school for an entire school year receive a bonus equal to 20% of their local salary supplement. Also, extra teaching positions allow Equity Plus schools to reduce class sizes by as many as six students below the more advantaged schools in the district. Class size is an important working-conditions issue for teachers considering several schools.

While the Equity Plus program may serve as an example for some districts with hard-to-staff schools, many school systems do not have the resources to support recruitment strategies that require salary supplements and extensive recruitment travel. These systems find themselves at a significant disadvantage as they try to compete for qualified teachers. Clearly, they have the greatest need for comprehensive recruitment plans – plans that are built on a thorough understanding of the conditions described in this report that influence teacher job selection.

Collecting and reporting data are a must. In our review of the wide array of recruitment initiatives launched across the nation in recent years, we have surfaced very little data on outcomes and little hard evidence that hard-to-staff schools are benefiting from these efforts. Currently, states have little data and few means to assemble information that can speak authoritatively to how much progress states are making in ensuring that every student has a competent, caring, and qualified teacher and to what extent their own policies are yielding better teaching, better supported teachers, and better student achievement.

Still, we "generally" know that while some colleges and universities, in some cases, produce teachers we do not need (e.g., elementary teachers), we continue to have growing shortages of math, science, and special education teachers and of teachers who are willing (and prepared) to teach in hard-to-staff schools. Good data can make these issues clearer and more compelling for policy makers to take needed, and most likely, provocative actions. We are beginning to see some progress.

Georgia has created a Teacher Workforce Center, serving as an information clearinghouse for both teachers and recruiters, as well as a vehicle to collect and analyze critical supply and demand data. In North Carolina, the Department of Public Instruction's newly created Center for Recruitment and Retention may prove a helpful first step in this regard. Organized within the Department in September 2001, this Center hopes to provide leadership on this issue by promoting teaching through effective marketing and recruitment strategies. Plans are already underway to design a "Teach4NC" website as well as to develop an 800-number to access comprehensive information about teaching within the state.

New data collection in two states has spawned useful information. In North Carolina, 22% of the teachers in low performing schools are on a provisional or substandard license (compared to 10% in high performing schools) and high performing schools are more likely to retain teachers.[18] In Alabama, new teachers who were more effective, based on the state's rigorous evaluation process, are more likely to stay in teaching.[19]

In a 21st century society, with its many interlocking and interdependent relationships, broad education alliances are a necessity. Business and industry, economic development centers, local and state governments, foundations, non-profit agencies, and the like must join together in efforts to ensure that every public school child has a competent, caring and qualified teacher with the skills and knowledge required to help every student meet 21st century standards.

Southeastern States Search for Solutions

States and school systems across the Southeast are taking action to improve teacher recruitment and retention. Here are examples of initiatives specifically designed to improve recruitment and retention of quality teachers for hard-to-staff schools.

Alabama

- Alabama has appropriated significant funds to provide scholarship loans to junior and senior education majors who agree to be certified in and teach math or science for at least 5 years in targeted grades and geographic shortage areas of the state.

Arkansas

- Arkansas H.B. 1939 created the University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program, making scholarships available to Masters of Education students for the purpose of attracting them to areas in which there is a critical shortage of teachers. The bill awards three, $2,000-a-year scholarships to qualified persons pursuing a Master of Education degree while serving as a licensed teacher in a geographical area of the state where a shortage exists.

Florida

- House Bill 63 provides $1,000 bonuses to National Board Certified Teachers who teach in grade F schools.
- The Premier Project partnership between Duval County Public Schools, Florida Community College-Jacksonville, and University of North Florida recruits minority teachers into urban schools.

Georgia

- Legislation provides bonuses and other incentives for teaching in hard-to-staff geographical areas and in critical shortage fields, including math, science, foreign languages and special education.
- Georgia's Office of Education Accountability is planning to issue its first school report cards for K-8 schools and high schools in 2003 and 2004, respectively. These high-stakes reports will grade schools on absolute performance and improvement. Governor Roy Barnes is considering offering bonuses to teachers who agree to teach in low-performing schools before the report cards come out.[1]

Kentucky

- Kentucky allows retired teachers to return to critical shortage areas without loss of retirement benefits.

Louisiana

- The 11 poorest performing schools, all located in New Orleans, were designated learning academies in the spring of 2001, and 5,118 uncertified teachers were told they would not be allowed to return to the learning academies for 2001-2002. The state offers a $2,500 bonus and 125 extra hours of professional development to experienced teachers willing to relocate to the learning academies.

Mississippi

In 1998, Mississippi passed the Critical Teacher Shortage Act, which contained several components.

- *Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program* provides full scholarships to teaching candidates who major in an appropriate area, obtain a standard teaching license, and teach in a geographical shortage area. The recipient is required to teach one year in a shortage area for each year of tuition scholarship.
- *William F. Winter Teacher Scholar Loan Program* provides tuition loans for college students who plan to teach in a shortage subject area or geographic shortage area. The loans are then converted into interest-free scholarships at the ratio of two semesters of service for each year of tuition loan forgiven.
- State-licensed teachers who relocate in order to work in a high-need school are eligible for up to $1,000 in moving expenses. Critical shortage districts are also authorized to reimburse travel for candidates visiting the school from other areas.
- *University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program* attracts teachers seeking a master's degree to move to critical shortage areas. In exchange for five years of service beginning while enrolled in a masters degree program, teachers receive tuition scholarship for their degree and become eligible for moving expenses.
- *Mississippi Employer-Assisted Housing Teacher Program Fund* established a fund for home loans to licensed teachers in critical geographic shortage areas.

North Carolina

- In the 2001-2003 biennial budget, the General Assembly has allocated funds to support the improvement of student learning in High Priority Schools with at least 80% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch and at least 40% performing below grade level. These schools will have maximum class sizes of 15 in K-3. There will be no teacher assistants in those classes, although an additional instructional support position will be funded for the school. Schools will have the option in 2001-2002 of adding 5 professional development days and, in 2002-2003, 5 extra instructional days and 5 extra professional development days. The schools must meet state accountability standards for three years in order to remain eligible.

South Carolina

- Teacher specialists who qualify to assist in struggling districts can earn a bonus of up to 50% of the regional average teacher's salary, as part of the Education Accountability Act of 1998.
- Teachers in "critical needs schools" can apply for forgiveness of South Carolina or Perkins loans in the fall of 2001 in exchange for remaining five years in the schools. Also, the definition of critical needs was broadened to include all schools with 30% free or reduced lunch, regardless of recruitment difficulty.

Tennessee

- As part of the Tennessee Exemplary Educators program, the state department of education allocated $1 million to offer 100-day contracts for retired teachers to work in low-performing schools.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

To guarantee that every hard-to-staff school enjoys high-quality teachers with the skills, knowledge and commitment to raise the achievement of all students, state leaders should examine current programs and reshape policies as necessary to ensure that they:

- Provide scholarships to prepare out-of-field teachers and paraprofessionals who already work in hard-to-staff schools to serve as fully licensed teachers.
- Recruit a critical mass of accomplished teachers to lead reform of hard-to-staff schools, serving as mentors, coaches, and curriculum leaders.
- Overstaff schools where nontraditional recruits are employed and allow experienced teachers to team-teach with them.
- Provide internships for teachers-in-training in hard-to-staff schools, such as those found in Professional Development Schools. Offer all teaching candidates pre-service experience in urban and rural schools.
- Improve working conditions and school building leadership in hard-to-staff schools and make these issues a high state and local priority.
- Encourage or require districts with hard-to-staff schools to develop comprehensive staffing plans that address recruitment, hiring, induction, and working conditions and that directly link staffing plans to school improvement strategies.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS TO RECRUIT TEACHERS TO HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS

Education and community leaders at every level can take action to support hard-to-staff schools and the students they serve, who are most in need of quality teachers. We know our recommendations must be supported by specific coordinated actions. Here are some suggested actions that can help spark greater dialogue among state education departments and boards, state legislatures, colleges and universities, and local district and school leaders.

Provide scholarships to prepare out-of-field teachers and paraprofessionals who already work in hard-to-staff schools to serve as fully-licensed teachers.

- Develop grow-your-own programs and paraprofessional certification programs to meet defined needs.
- Provide extra financial and social support to minority and other nontraditional teacher candidates to prepare them to teach in hard-to-staff schools.

Recruit a critical mass of accomplished teachers to lead reform of hard-to-staff schools, serving as mentors, coaches, and curriculum leaders.

- Offer hiring incentives to cohorts of student teachers who have experience working together as interns in hard-to-staff schools.
- Provide incentives for high-quality principals to move to hard-to-staff schools.

Overstaff schools where nontraditional recruits are employed and allow experienced teachers to team-teach with them.

Provide internships for teachers-in-training, such as those found in Professional Development Schools, in hard-to-staff schools. Offer all teaching candidates pre-service experience in urban and rural schools.

- Create or expand teacher fellowships and other high-quality scholarship programs to prepare teachers with specific targets of service in hard-to-staff schools.
- Develop Professional Development Schools in hard-to-staff schools, to adequately train prospective teachers for the challenges they will face (see PDS standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education[20]).
- Create new field experiences in hard-to-staff schools for student teachers and interns.
- Host information-sharing meetings or other events between teaching candidates and teachers working in hard-to-staff schools.
- Send teachers and district officials to meet with candidates and invite them to visit several hard-to-staff schools.
- Form partnerships between teacher education programs and local school systems for the induction of new teachers and professional development of experienced teachers.

Improve working conditions and school building leadership and make these issues a high state and local priority.

- Fully fund and monitor the induction of new teachers to ensure that new teacher support programs meet the challenges teachers face in hard-to-staff schools.
- Provide supplemental funds for professional development and on-site technical assistance to any school with 25% inexperienced teachers or 15% teacher turnover.
- Continue to raise salaries and standards for teachers across the board.
- Offer principals flexibility in hiring and general staffing to meet the special learning needs of each school.
- Reduce teaching loads of new teachers in hard-to-staff schools, through new scheduling plans, reallocated staff, and limited course preps.
- Prepare principals to redesign schools to be more conducive to student and teacher learning and improved working conditions.
- Make teacher retention a major part of principal evaluation processes.

Encourage or require districts with hard-to-staff schools to develop comprehensive staffing plans that address recruitment, hiring, induction, and working conditions and that directly link staffing plans to school improvement strategies.

- Provide incentive grants to universities and school districts to develop local solutions, such as grow-your-own programs and paraprofessional certification programs, and disseminate model initiatives.
- Create or strengthen statewide teacher recruitment and retention centers, serving as information clearinghouses and program incubators. South Carolina's program has many features of a good model.
- Create comprehensive teacher recruitment and retention plans, linked directly to school improvement plans.

The Importance of School-Based Support in the Nation's Hard-to-Staff Schools

The key to addressing teacher shortages lies not in attractive recruitment policies but in support and training for new teachers, say researchers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project on the Next Generation of Teachers. And support and training is doubly important for beginning teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

While creative recruitment strategies that lure new teachers to certain districts and sites "may well increase the supply of new teachers to schools, they provide no assurance of keeping them there, for they are but short-term responses to long-term challenges," conclude Susan Moore Johnson and her research colleagues. "It is in schools and classrooms where teachers must find success and satisfaction. It is there they will decide whether or not to continue to teach."

The authors cite the research of Richard Ingersoll at the University of Pennsylvania, who found a "revolving door" of teacher attrition and turnover to be "a primary contributor to school staffing shortages, particularly in urban schools. Poor working conditions and lack of significant on-the-job training and support are major reasons why many new teachers leave the profession within five years."

The Harvard project staff interviewed 50 first- and second-year Massachusetts teachers working in a wide range of schools. Many who had once been eager to become teachers reported "that they need much more encouragement and direction than their schools currently provide."

"For instance, we found that new teachers had few of the traditional supports that one might expect would be routine," the researchers wrote in a recent issue of the *Harvard Education Letter*. "They reported receiving little guidance about what to teach or how to teach it. Instead, most described struggling on their own each day to cobble together content and materials, often with no coherent, long-term plan for meeting specific learning objectives."

Most mentor programs, the researchers found, lacked substance and failed to live up to any reasonable definition of "mentoring." "Although virtually all of the new teachers we interviewed had official mentors assigned by their districts, those mentors frequently taught in different schools, levels, or subjects, and meetings with them were intermittent and brief at best. Our respondents yearned for ongoing observations and feedback, but classroom visits by colleagues and administrators were rare."

Few of the new teachers in the study found their schools were organized to help them cope with difficulties and become better teachers. "Schedules rarely provided regular time for joint planning and observation, nor was such collaboration expected or encouraged. Meetings were designed to dispense information to individuals, rather than to share struggles and strategies....In the worst cases, school leaders played no role in creating a culture that was welcoming and supportive to new teachers."

New teachers who *did* feel supported described their schools as having what the researchers call "integrated professional cultures." New teachers had frequent and meaningful interaction among faculty members across all experience levels and were treated as novice professionals who needed support but also had contributions to make.

The researchers stress that "while states and districts can assume responsibility for increasing pay, reducing or altering entry requirements, or creating career ladders, such initiatives will ultimately make little difference if a teacher is dissatisfied with teaching."

They urge leaders to consider that:

- Well-matched mentors, curriculum guidance, collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, and inspired leadership all support new teachers in ways that recruitment incentives never can.
- The principal can play a central role in establishing faculty norms and facilitating interaction among teachers with various levels of experience. Successful induction may also be promoted by having teachers and principals play greater roles in the hiring process and in selecting their future colleagues.
- The benefits of school-based improvement efforts are not limited to novice teacher induction, for they provide renewal for experienced teachers and the foundation for school-wide improvement.

"Improving working conditions and restructuring schools to support individual, group, and organizational learning is a big task," the Harvard researchers conclude. "While teachers and principals must do most of the heavy lifting, fostering integrated professional cultures and creating truly supportive school-based induction programs will require time and money, resources often in short supply in public schools. As policymakers direct new resources into recruitment, they would be wise to direct a good portion of those resources toward the schools, for it is at the individual school site where the potential to address the teacher shortage truly rests."

Source: *Harvard Education Letter*. "Retaining the Next Generation of Teachers: The Importance of School-Based Support." (July/August 2001).

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Source of ad on cover: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (1996), p. 54.

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